



The Sixty-eighth Season of
The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lammot Belin
Concerts

National Gallery of Art
2,776th Concert

Ewa Poblocka, pianist

Presented in honor of the
200th year of Chopin's birth and in cooperation
with the Embassy of the Republic of Poland

March 14, 2010
Sunday Evening, 6:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free

Program

Music by Fryderyk Chopin (1810–1849)

Nocturne in E Minor, op. 72 (c. 1829)

Ballade no. 1 in G Minor, op. 23 (c. 1835)

Polonaise in A Major, op. 40 (1838)

Waltz in B Minor, op. 69 (1829)

Waltz in D-flat Major, op. 64, no. 1 (1847)

Waltz in C-sharp Minor, op. 64, no. 2 (1847)

Impromptu in A-flat Major, op. 29 (c. 1837)

Ballade in A-flat Major, op. 47 (1841)

INTERMISSION

Nocturne in C-sharp Minor, op. 27, no. 1 (1835)

Scherzo in B-flat Minor, op. 31 (1837)

Mazurka in E minor, op. 41, no. 1 (1838)

Mazurka in B Major, op. 41, no. 2 (1839)

Mazurka in A-flat Major, op. 41, no. 3 (1839)

Mazurka in C-sharp Major, op. 41, no. 4 (1839)

Scherzo in B Minor, op. 20 (c. 1835)

The Musician

Distinguished Polish pianist and pedagogue Ewa Poblocka is a graduate of the Music Academy in Gdansk, and the holder of top awards from piano competitions in Bordeaux, Vercelli, and Warsaw. She has performed throughout Europe, as well as in Australia, Japan, Korea, Singapore, and both North and South America, and has appeared at famous venues that include the Herkules-Saal in Munich, the Musikhalle in Hamburg, the Auditorio Nacional in Madrid, the Barbican Centre and Wigmore Hall in London, the Musikverein in Vienna, New York's Lincoln Center, and Glenn Gould Studio in Toronto.

Poblocka's concert performances include appearances with the London Symphony Orchestra, English Chamber Orchestra, Orchestra del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, Bayerischer Rudfunkorchester, Niederösterreichisches Tonkünstlerorchester, Polish National Philharmonic Orchestra in Warsaw, Polish Chamber Orchestra, and the Polish Radio National Symphony Orchestra in Katowice. She has collaborated in performance with singers Ewa Podles, Jadwiga Rappé, and Olga Pasiiecznik, as well as with violinist Piotr Pławner and the Silesian String Quartet.

Poblocka's performances have been broadcast widely. She has recorded for the BeArTon, Conifer Records, Deutsche Grammophon, and VICTOR JVC labels. Her recording of Witold Lutosławski's *Piano Concerto*, under the direction of the composer, was named "Record of the Year" in 1996 by *Studio* magazine. Her recording of Field's complete *Nocturnes* was awarded the John Field Medal. Poblocka's other award-winning recordings include the piano concertos of Andrzej Panufnik, Witold Lutosławski, and Paweł Szymański with the Polish National Philharmonic Orchestra under Kazimierz Kord, and a recording with contralto Jadwiga Rappé of the songs by Mieczysław Karłowicz. Her most recent recordings include Chopin's complete *Mazurkas*; Chopin's *Fantasia on the Polish Airs*, op. 2 with Sinfonia Varsovia under Jacek Kasprzyk (world premiere recording based on the Polish National Edition edited by Jan Ekier); Bach's complete *Partitas*; and Faure's complete *Nocturnes*.

Program Notes

On May 9, 2008, the Sejm, Poland's lower house of Parliament, declared 2010 the "Year of Fryderyk Chopin." Considered to be one of the greatest artists in the history of Polish culture, and the country's most distinguished Romantic composer as well as a cultural ambassador for the folk music of Poland, Chopin played an exceptional role in shaping the country's national identity. To commemorate the composer's birthday, events are scheduled all over the world throughout the year. Tonight's concert—one of many in Washington, DC—is being presented in cooperation with the Embassy of the Republic of Poland.

Chopin's actual date of birth is a source of some controversy: the official town registration recorded his birth date as February 22, 1810, but he (and his family) always said that his birthday was March 1. Born to a French father and a Polish mother, he was the second of four children in a family that had the resources to provide a complete and well-rounded education in which culture and art were emphasized. Showing a prodigious talent at an early age, Chopin's first public performance was at age nine. In 1928, while Poland was in the throes of revolution, Chopin performed in Austria and Bohemia, before settling in Paris. At the time Europe's most vibrant musical city, Paris housed many exiled Polish aristocrats, and he found a home there, literally and musically. In France, Chopin began the most storied part of his life—his relationship with writer George Sand (Mme. Aurore Dudevant). Under her influence for seven years, Chopin lived with her in Paris, in Nohant at her country home, and at one point, in Majorca. Following a tour throughout England and Scotland, he died of tuberculosis in Paris in 1849.

With a distinct style that is immediately recognizable, Chopin's music is arguably the most frequently performed of all composers of piano music. Equally gifted at creating memorable and engaging melodies as well as complex chromatic harmonies, Chopin was the master of miniatures. He composed innumerable shorter pieces, mostly inspired by dances — mazurkas, polonaises, and waltzes — and also created some new forms, such as the *Ballade*, a single-movement work of large proportion. Inspired by Italian opera — in particular by Bellini's bel canto style — Chopin composed many pieces that featured a beautiful lyrical right-hand melody with a simple accompaniment in the left hand. The *Nocturnes* exemplify this style.

With a misleading opus number of 72, the *Nocture in E Minor*, published and catalogued posthumously, was among the first compositions, and definitely the first of the nocturnes that Chopin composed. As a student at the University of Warsaw, Chopin would have heard the *Nocturnes* of Irish composer John Field (1782–1837). In posterity, Field's work has been all but forgotten, but he is remembered for originating the form that Chopin took to a superior level.

Inspired by the epic ballads of the Romantic poets (Friedrich Schiller, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and especially Polish poets Adam Mickiewicz and Yulius Slovatski), Chopin developed his *Ballades* as a new type of work. He incorporated multiple themes and contrasting ideas into one extended movement. *Ballade no.1 in G Minor* was praised by both Robert Schumann and Franz Liszt, who also composed works that did not fall into traditional classical categories.

As a champion of all things Polish, Chopin did a great service to the national pride by taking various folk dance forms and popularizing them as energetic, virtuosic piano works. Though the title “polonaise” was used previously by J. S. Bach, Carl Maria von Weber, and other composers, Chopin revitalized the form, infusing it with a new spirit. The *Mazurkas* are masterpieces of harmonic innovation — each one unique as an aspect of folk culture

as well as a tribute to the genius of the composer. The *Waltzes*, of which there are fourteen, do not brim so much with national fervor, as the dance form did not originate in Poland. Chopin used charm and elegance in these pieces, and sometimes even took the “dance-ability” out of the waltz rendering it a little more nostalgic in tone.

The four *Impromptus* fall somewhere between the *Nocturnes* and the larger pieces. Generally composed with two themes, they are excellent examples of salon music, and probably were not considered great concert pieces by the composer. Used as a musical form by Bach and Beethoven — typically as a movement within a larger work — the *Scherzo*, in the hands of Chopin, became something much larger and more complex. Far from the Italian meaning of the word — a joke, or a witty character — Chopin’s *Scherzos* are dramatic and tragic works that explore several different themes and return to them before the piece is finished.

Program notes by Danielle DeSwert Hahn

Next Week at the National Gallery of Art

amarcord

Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century German music

March 17, 2010

Wednesday, 12:10 pm

West Building, West Garden Court



Dan Franklin Smith, pianist

Music by Chopin, Gershwin, and Liszt

March 21, 2010

Sunday Evening, 6:30 pm

West Building, West Garden Court

The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed. Please be sure that cell phones, pagers, and other electronic devices are turned off.

Please note that late entry or reentry of the West Building after 6:30 pm is not permitted.

For the convenience of concertgoers the Garden Café remains open until 6:00 pm for light refreshments.

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